

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PEREDA'S CRITICAL WEEK

REF: STATE 191823

1. I DELIVERED THE MESSAGE IN REFTEL TO PEREDA, VIA TAPIA, ON SATURDAY. TAPIA THOUGHT OUR POSITION WOULD BE HELPFUL, BUT WAS NOT SURE AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED IN THE AUGUST 1, 2 MILITARY MEETING ON AN ELECTION DATE EARLIER THAN MAY 1980. I REITERATED THAT AN EARLIER DATE SHOULD BE POSSIBLE, IN OUR VIEW. ALSO ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAD NOW PRONOUNCED IN FAVOR OF ELECTIONS IN ONE YEAR OR LESS. IF THE NEW ELECTION DATE AND PLAN WAS TO SERVE ITS PURPOSE OF UNIFYING THE COUNTRY, THE MILITARY WOULD HAVE TO TAKE THESE POSITIONS INTO ACCOUNT. ANOTHER PLAN DICTATED BY THE MILITARY WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH CIVILAIN ELEMENTS WOULD RUN THE UNNECESSARY RISK OF FAILING TO GET THEIR COLLABORATION. TAPIA SAID HE WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD TO GET SOME CONSULTATION. HE SAID THAT HE HIMSELF HAD TALKED TO VICTOR PAZ AND THOUGHT HE WOULD SUPPORT A MAY 1980 ELECTION DATE. I SAID I WAS NOT SURE THIS WAS CORRECT, BUT THE IMPORTANT POINT WAS TO CONSULT AND TAKE ACCOUNT OF VIEWS OF THE PARTIES AND OTHER CIVILIAN SECTORS. (IN MY CONVERSATION WITH TAPIA, I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT

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THE RESISTANCE TO ELECTIONS IN 1979 STEMS FROM TWO FACTORS:

A) THE GENERALS' PHOBIA REGARDING THE CENTENNIAL YEAR AND
B) PEREDA'S PERSONAL DESIRE TO HAVE A GOVERNING PERIOD LONG ENOUGH TO VINDICATE HIS ROLE AS WELL AS CONSTITUTIONALIZE BOLIVIA.)

2. ON SUNDAY, VICTOR PAZ CAME BY THE HOUSE, AT HIS REQUEST.

HE SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT SOME OF THE OFFICERS OF THE GENERATIONAL MOVEMENT WERE PLANNING A COUP FOR MID-AUGUST IF PEREDA HAD NOT ANNOUNCED AN ACCEPTABLE ELECTION PLAN BY THEN. HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THIS, GIVEN THE DEEP DIVISIONS IN THE MILITARY, AND ASKED MY VIEW. I TOLD PAZ I VIEWED ANY COUP WITH GREAT APPREHENSION, SINCE I DOUBTED, GIVEN THE TENSIONS AND DIVISIONS HE CITED, THAT IT WOULD BE A BLOODLESS ONE, AND ONCE THE FIGHTING STARTED NO ONE, INCLUDING THE PLANNERS OF A COUP, COULD TELL WHERE IT WOULD END. I THOUGHT A BETTER COURSE FOR ANY GENERATIONAL OFFICERS IN TOUCH WITH PAZ WOULD BE TO WORK IN THE AUGUST 1, 2 MEETING FOR A MILITARY DECISION IN FAVOR OF EARLY ELECTIONS. IF THE MILITARY COULD UNITE ON SUCH A COURSE, PEREDA WOULD ALMOST SURELY ACCEPT IT.

3. PAZ SAID HIS FIRM PREFERENCE WAS NOW ELECTIONS AND CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN ONE YEAR. PART OF HIS REASONING WAS THAT A LONGER PERIOD MIGHT ALLOW BANZER TIME TO BUILD UP A POLITICAL POSITION AND RUN HIMSELF. PAZ SAID HE HAD NOT DECIDED WHETHER HE HIMSELF WOULD RUN AGAIN. (HIS BACKERS HAVE DECIDED HE SHOULD NOT, BUT PAZ SEEMS TO BE GETTING ANXIOUS TO TRY AGAIN.) I URGED PAZ TO MAKE SURE THAT THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE AUGUST 1, 2 MILITARY MEETING UNDERSTAND HIS VIEWS.

4. COMMENT: THIS WEEK IS CRITICAL FOR PEREDA. HE HAS TO
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CONSOLIDATE HIS MILITARY BACKING AND GAIN WIDER ACCEPTANCE AND LEGITIMACY IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE, OR HE MAY BE DEPOSED. A NEW ELECTION PLAN SEEMS TO BE HIS BEST HOPE, BUT HE IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFUL IN DEVELOPING HIS PLAN TO FIND THE COMPROMISE OF LEAST TENSION AMONG THE PREFERENCES OF VARYING MILITARY AND CIVILIAN GROUPS. A SLIP NOW WILL BE EXPENSIVE FOR PEREDA AND PROBABLY FOR PEACEFUL EVOLUTION IN BOLIVIA.
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